

**Plough Play [adapted from the Tollerton play.
see: <http://www.chezfred.org.uk/for/plough-t.htm>]**

The characters:

Tom Fool – dressed in working clothes, could carry balloon, feather duster etc
Recruiting Sergeant – in red frock coat with sergeant's stripes
Farmer – hob-nail boots, trousers tied with string, old jacket and hat, long whip
Lady – (in drag) well dressed but not too posh, very buxom
Dame Jane – (in drag) very well dressed
Farmer's Boy or Threshing Blade – looks ancient
Doctor – riding hat, hacking/hunting jacket or tails

The play is not played seriously, there should be much over-acting and asides.
Changing words to make it topical and audience participation are essential. Make the most of any innuendo or double-entendre in the script.

All cast are off at start and only appear on cue.

Open with fanfare, jig or other lively music

Tom Fool In comes I, the bold, old fool
Good afternoon ladies, gentlemen all
We have just come to taste your wine and beer
We have come to make you merry
Button up your coats, face this
And see our gallant play today.
Some think they can dance and some think they can sing
At your consent they shall come in
Okum, Pokum, France and Spain
In comes the Recruiting Sergeant on his name

Recruiting Sergeant In comes I the Recruiting Sergeant
I have arrived here just now
And have orders from the Queen
Enlist all young men that follow horses, cart, wagon,
plough or Arsenal;
Tinkers, tailors, peddlers, nailers,
Ramblers, greeners, gardners and sailors.
All the more to my advance
The more I hear the music play
The better I can dance

Tom Fool What, you dance?

Recruiting Sergeant Yes, I can either dance, sing or say

Tom Fool If you start to dance or sing
You'll fright us all with such ghastly thing
I'd better quickly walk away
Lest I be 'tranced by what you say.

Short burst of music and dance

Farmer In comes I jolly farmer of t' land
Don't you see my whip in hand
As I go forth to plough the sod and turn it upside down
I'd rather have a Fordson tractor than all the 'orses in town.
But this proud shire works all the day,
No diesel does he use but runs on sweet, fresh hay.
I go straight from end to end
And never make a baulk or bend
And all my horses I attend
As they go marching round the end
Whoa, back Bob.

Lady Behold the slighted lady bright and gay
I have good fortune and sweet charms
How wantonly I've been thrown away
Out of my true love's arms
He says as I won't to him wed
He'll let me understand
He will 'list all for a soldier
And go into some foreign land.

Recruiting Sergeant Come all you lads that have a mind for listening
'List and do not be afraid
I'll tell thee of the treats in store if you enlist this day –
You shall have all kinds of liquors, beers and ales
And likewise kiss this fair pretty maid.

To Farmer Are you willing to serve the Queen young man?

Farmer Thanks kind Sergeant for your offer
Time away does quickly pass
The health and wealth does very well suit me
But I'm in love with this buxom lass.

Recruiting Sergeant This buxom lass she will not maintain you
Her beauty it will fade away
Like the first rose of summer the winter doth become
Ten bright guineas shall be your bounty
If along with me you'll go
Your hat shall be neatly trimmed with ribbon
You shall cut a gallant show.
Are you free willing and able to serve your Queen?

Farmer Yes, Sergeant [*salutes*]

Recruiting Sergeant In your hand I place this shilling
On your hat I place this ribbon
You are a Queen's man.

Lady And since my love has left me, and entered volunteers
I neither mean to sigh for him or yet to shed one tear
I neither mean to sigh for him but just to let you know
I will get another sweetheart and along with him I'll go.
[Looks for a man in crowd]

Tom Fool *[intervening]* Do you love me my pretty fair maid?

Lady Yes, to my sorrow

Tom Fool And when shall be our wedding day?

Lady Tommy dear, tomorrow

All 4 And we'll shake hands and we'll make banns
And we'll get wed tomorrow.

Dame Jane In comes I Dame Jane
With a neck as long as any crane
Bibble, babble, over the meadows
A long time I have sought thee and now I have got thee
Pray, Tommy, take thy child

Tom Fool Child, Jinny? It's not my child
Look at it, it's not a bit like me

Dame Jane Look at its eyes, nose and chin
It is as much like you as ever it can grin.

Tom Fool Who says so?

Dame Jane The clerk of the parish council said I was to bring it
To the biggest fool in the village
and I think you are he.

Tom Fool Thank you, Jinny.

Farmer's Boy In come I old threshing blade.
As all you people know
My old dad learnt me this trade
Just sixty years ago
I thrashed old Bony-part and all his crew
And I will thrash you before I go
[puts up his fists against the Recruiting Sergeant]

Recruiting Sergeant You won't.

Farmer's Boy

I will

[Recruiting Sergeant knocks Farmer's Boy down.]

Tom Fool

O, Murphy, Murphy, what hast thou done
Thou hast killed and slain mine only son
Mine only son, mine only heir
Can'st thou not see the bleeder there?
Five pounds for a doctor.

Recruiting Sergeant

Ten pounds for him to stay away.

Tom Fool

Fifteen for him to come
If there is one to be found anywhere.

Recruiting Sergeant

Well, there is.

Tom Fool

Well, step in doctor.

Doctor

Whoa boys, whoa boys, take hold of my horse
Mind it does not swallow you
In comes I the doctor.

Tom Fool

What, you the doctor?

Doctor

Yes, me the doctor.

Tom Fool

Have I seen you somewhere else inside?
Like in the pub at Christmas Tide?
How became you to be a doctor?

Doctor

By my travels.

Tom Fool

Where did you travel?

Doctor

Italy, Ireland, Germany, France and Spain
Thirteen times round the world and back again.

Tom Fool

What, as far as that?

Doctor

Yes, and a great deal further than that.
Also ten miles yon side of Kennet
Where I cured an old woman called Mrs Bennet.
She tumbled upstairs with a teapot
Half full of cold boiling water.
And grazed her shin just below the elbow
And made her stocking top bleed.
Also to my old grandmother's cupboard
Where I always used to get a piece of cake and pork pie,
That's what makes me such a fine big man.

Tom Fool Fine big man you are.

Doctor Yes, as big as two men in this place.
My own size particularly when I get my hat off.

Tom Fool What great pains can you cure, doctor?

Doctor Ipsy, pipsy, palsy, gout
Pains within and pains without
Draw a leg, set a tooth
Physic cats, poison rats
Almost bring a dead man to life again.....
But I haven't done that yet.

Tom Fool You seem a clever old chap, doctor
I wish you would try your skill on this young man.

Doctor By your leave, sir, I will.
Here pretty lady, take hold of this hat, stick and walking
gloves
While I feel this man's pulse.
[feels pulse in foot, or up his trouser leg]

Tom Fool Pulse man, pulse. The pulse doesn't lie there.

Doctor Where Tommy, where would you feel?

Tom Fool You feel the bridge of the neck and the back of the nose
of course
That's the hardest and softest part about him.

Doctor This man is not dead, he is in a trance,
He has been trying a new experiment.

Tom Fool What is that doctor?

Doctor He has been living on green raw boiled potatoes tops
Nine days all but a fortnight
Also swallowed his old Grandmother's donkey and cart
And couldn't digest the wheels.

Tom Fool By the way doctor, what pills do you carry?

Doctor Oh, I have a box of pills here.
These pills are anti-bilious pills
Take one at night and one in the morning
And swallow the box at dinner time
If the pills do not digest, the box will
Oh, I have another box here....

Tom Fool

Stilts for shrimps, crutches for lame grasshoppers
Spectacles for blind bumble-bees
And many other things I cannot mention just now.
Inside my inside trousers waistcoat pocket that I have left
at home
I have a bottle of whiff-whaff
To teem down his old tiff-taff.
If you can dance and I can sing
Arise old chap and let's begin.

[Farmer's Boy gets up]

All

To the 'Mummers' Song tune:
Good masters and good mistress
As you sit around your fire
Remember us poor ploughboys
Who plough through mud and mire

The mire it is so very deep
The water runs so clear
Put your hands into y'r pockets
That is all that we desire

Put bread into our hoppers
And beer into our cans
Let's hope that you will never forget
The jolly old Farmer's Man.

[Fool leaves]

Good masters and good mistress
You see our fool has gone
We make it our business
To follow him along.

We thank you for civility
And what you gave us here
We wish you all good afternoon
And another fertile year.